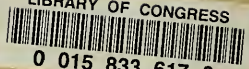


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THE MENACE OF MEXICO

Remarks before the League of Free Nations Association,
December 20, 1919, New York City.

By

IRA JEWELL WILLIAMS

Philadelphia, Pa.

"The Utopia alike of Trotsky and Carranza is a despotism of force under the guise of a great popular reform."

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The Menace of Mexico

The normal state of Mexico is revolution and internal strife.

Before Diaz there were 57 revolutions in 57 years.

So-called Mexican "concessions" are merely charters.

Many Carranzista soldiers are convicts and even murderers.

Americans in the oil regions gave true patriotic service "that the flag of freedom might still float on the seven seas and that justice might not perish from the earth."

There is no record of any German killed in Mexico during Carranza's time nor is there any record of justice being meted out to any murderer of an American during Carranza's time.

Carranza was and is rabidly pro-German.

"Bandit" is a word of wide significance in Mexico, where it means any one who by force is expressing disapproval of the Carranza regime.

Carranza does not want to restore order because it means the end of his personal power.

No survey of Mexico would be complete which omitted a word about Bolshevism.

The Utopia alike of Trotzky and Carranza is a depotism of force under the guise of a great popular reform.

America does not desire, and will never take one inch of territory from Mexico.

Encl.
Hon. Robert Luce
J. 17 '20

F.B.M. 1920-2-28

THE MENACE OF MEXICO.

An American ambassador recently addressed an audience on the subject of the country to which he was accredited. He apologized afterwards for the extreme dullness of the talk, saying that he wanted to go back, and that if he told all the facts and the interesting facts, he could not go back. I will not mention the name of the ambassador or the country to which he was accredited. But I find myself in somewhat similar case in respect of the country of Mexico. I have been to Mexico, and I want to go back to Mexico, but more important than going back to Mexico, after I have gone back to Mexico I want to come back from Mexico, *and not in a coffin!*

When in the city of Mexico recently I asked the representative of another nation whether he thought I was quite safe so far as Carranza and his adherents were concerned, in view of certain more or less outspoken utterances giving facts tending to show that Carranza was pro-German, anti-foreign, anti-American, anti-religious, and inclined to red radicalism. This gentleman's reply was not especially reassuring. He said that one of several things might happen. First, I might be "thirty-threed." Article 33 of the new Carranza Constitution provides that any foreigner whom the executive deems pernicious to the welfare of the country may be deported without further ado. The customary method pursued was to arrest the gentleman in question, frequently an American, to handcuff him and send him to the calaboose, an indescribably filthy place, whence he was escorted under guard to the train and sent to the border. These attendant refinements of insult have, I am told, been omitted of late by request of our diplomatic rep-

representative, but Article 33 remains in full force and vigor. In the last year there have been seventy-two naturalizations in Mexico; on the other hand, sixty-six were complimented by receiving the "thirty-third" degree.

There are a number of mistaken viewpoints of the Mexican problem. For example, one intelligent gentleman said to me the other day, "Do you know that until recently it has been in the back of my head that the cause of all these revolutions and disturbances in Mexico was the Americans themselves; that they have stirred up strife in order to get personal advantage to themselves?"

"Why," I said to him, "have you forgotten the history of Mexico; that the normal state of Mexico is revolution and internal strife; that Mexico under Diaz was abnormal to the extent that there was law and order as there was security for life and property? Have you forgotten that before Diaz there were more than fifty-seven revolutions in fifty-seven years, and that since Diaz there had been eight so-called presidents in Mexico? How can you imagine that your fellow-countrymen could possibly be so malign as to act any such part and what motive would the Americans have for such conduct? What motive have they except to wish and hope for a condition of prosperity and peace in Mexico which will permit of their peaceful activities there?"

Another mistaken viewpoint inexplicable to one familiar with the facts is that concessions and concessionaires are at the root of the difficulty. If you will examine the facts you will find that all foreign-held rights in Mexico have been obtained by purchase from private owners with exceptions so slight as to be immaterial. But you may ask, "What is a concession in Mexico?" So far as it affects the Mexican problem, there is no such thing; we think of a concession as a grant by government of government property or rights at the expense of the public. It means no such thing in Mexico. There the term "concession" is applied indiscriminately to a charter such as is automatically granted in every

State of the Union upon complying with certain simple prerequisites or a permit to build anything from a wharf to a railroad or a pipe line or a building. And while speaking of concessions, let me say as a lawyer, that I know nothing as to whether Mexico was or is priest ridden, but I do know from my own experience that Mexico has suffered and does suffer from being lawyer ridden. Every ordinary step in life, in order to be properly done, requires the guiding hand of a lawyer.

There is still another mistaken viewpoint about Mexico and that is that there is an inherent hostility between Americans and Mexicans and that, owing in part at least to American manners, Americans cannot get along with Mexicans. I am willing to concede that American manners may be as bad on the surface as the manners of any other nation. But underneath we know that there is a feeling of humanity; there is a real kindliness and a real consideration. These things mean more in the long run than surface good manners, however desirable the latter may be. In Mexico I talked to men of long experience there, and I believe that even in the difficult relation of employer and employee Americans get on well in Mexico.

In one camp that I visited in the State of Vera Cruz, now protected by an armed guard against raids, I know that for nearly two years some five hundred Mexicans have worked side by side with a little group of perhaps a score of Americans, the Americans not permitted by Carranza's order to carry arms and relying solely upon their own courage and moral force. Yet there has been no instance of clash or disturbance. No writ ran in that camp. There were no courts, or judges or law officers to whom an appeal could be made. On the Gulf side a detachment of Carranzistas would be going up the coast at the same time that on the lagoon side three miles away a detachment of Pelaezistas would be marching the other way. There was every reason for disorder and chaos, but the camp was peaceful

except for the occasional outrages of Carranzista soldiers or outside bandits.

There was a great deal of trouble in getting the payrolls to these camps in the oil fields. The Carranzistas offered to carry the payrolls. This offer was accepted by the Aguila Company and the payrolls went down under the escort of three hundred Carranzista soldiers. They should have arrived in two days, but as they did not arrive, it was necessary to borrow from a nearby camp the money to pay the men. They finally arrived after two weeks and the payroll was delivered, but the *Carranzistas looted the camp and took everything loose and available*. It is generally accepted that many of the Carranzista soldiers are convicts and even murderers who have been given the alternative of execution or service in the ranks. Be that as it may, my testimony is that Americans, without the backing of the ordinary processes of law and simply because they are brave, true, kindly men, have been able to retain the control and service of hundreds of Mexicans, who have remained loyal and faithful and whose working conditions have been immeasurably improved by these Americans.

Then there is the wrong point of view toward the murders and outrages of Americans and the numerous other disturbances throughout Mexico. "Oh," you may say, "it is to be expected that these outrages and murders will occur because it is like any other border country. Conditions are pioneer conditions. You cannot expect law and order." But we must bear in mind that the civilization of Mexico is older than our own. After the turbulence of three score years of revolutions, Porfirio Diaz was able to establish tranquillity so that, I am told, one could travel throughout Mexico with greater safety than in many parts of the United States. In the sense of border warfare it is not a new country. And there is no reason inherent in the subject matter why these numerous outrages and murders of Americans should take place. I travelled through the most im-

portant fields of Tamaulipas and Vera Cruz, further south than the Tuxpam River and met the Americans there. Almost all were young men and almost all had been in the service here or overseas. My spirit rejoiced within me when I saw such splendid young American manhood. There is nowhere, I venture to say, a finer lot of young men than along the Gulf and the Tamiahua lagoon, on the Tuxpam River and the Tancochin River. And many of these men who did not see service either overseas or at home faced bravely the nameless dread of death, saw their companions shot down, disarmed, and yet stayed at their posts of danger in the time of their country's need. These men gave true patriotic service "that the flag of freedom might still float on the seven seas and that justice might not perish from the earth."

In all possible differences of opinion about the Mexican problem, can we not find some common ground upon which all fair-minded, just Americans may stand? Someone has said that the greatest difficulty in securing justice from the administration in a certain capitol city was to get the facts to the people who ought to know the facts. Perhaps I can best tell you such important facts as are within my knowledge by saying something of my own recent trip to Mexico.

How many of you know that Carranza stabled his horses in the Cathedrals and principal churches in Vera Cruz and other cities and that a delegation composed in part of American women visited Carranza in person and protested against the impious outrage? And Carranza sat mute and the horses were still stabled in the holy place. "Oh," some of you may say, "Cromwell did the like at Ely" and so he did—to his everlasting disgrace. It was a foul thing then. If possible, it is a fouler thing now that in the twentieth century a man is permitted to sit in the seat of power and be recognized by the Government of this Christian country, who could be guilty of such impiousness. They were Catholic Cathedrals and I am no Roman Catholic, but as a

Christian man I shall never fail to resent this unspeakable sin and outrage.

I will not harrow your feelings by recounting the numerous outrages to and murders of nuns and priests. The record, I believe, is 150 priests in Mexico City alone. One cannot go fully into the facts without seeing that this was in pursuance of a deliberate policy of wholesale murder and rape, a policy which, as much as the stablimg of the horses in the Cathedral, must have had the personal approval of Carranza himself.

You may have seen the murder map of Mexico which I hold in my hands. Three hundred and eighty-three deaths of Americans in Carranza's time down to August 21, 1919. Any lawless or evil-minded person in Mexico since Carranza's time has known and acted as if he could kill Americans with impunity. Not only is there no record of any German killed in Mexico in Carranza's time, but there is no record of justice being meted out to any murderer of an American in Mexico in Carranza's time. It was a deliberate intent, expressed by Carranza and by Carranza's followers, to drive the hated Gringos from the country. This is an important fact.

Carranza was and is rabidly pro-German,—the willing friend of and co-plotter with a group of scoundrels so filthy as to be incapable of description within parliamentary limits.

And just one word here: I had and have contempt and loathing for the assassins of the women and children on the Lusitania. But such contempt and loathing is as zero to infinity compared to my contempt and loathing for those who justified, who palliated that vile crime. *In the same way I had and have contempt and loathing for Carranza's crimes against Americans, against civilization, against Religion. But such contempt and loathing is as zero to infinity compared to the contempt and loathing we should feel for those malignant marplots or mischievous morons who seek to excuse such infamy.*

Yes! Carranza was and is rabidly pro-German. This is an important fact. But it is not the most important fact about Mexico. Let me first recount, however, a few other facts of less tremendous importance.

Mexico has been for nine years in the throes of civil war and bandits and banditry have flourished. *In Mexico "bandit" is a word of widespread significance. In Court circles in Mexico City it means any Mexican who by force is expressing his disapproval of the Carranza regime.*

We went through the Chijol canal, a place where robbers equipped with a careful inventory of the effects of those who have just gone through the Carranza customs at Tampico, sometimes lie in wait and rob and murder Americans in launches traveling down to the oil fields.

We heard of the habits of the Santa Marian Indians to treat their victims to a steak cut from their own abdomens, and of the Yaquis to shave the feet of their captives before starting their barefoot race. And we also learned of the disagreeable habit of dismembering Americans held for ransom. The practice is told of by Mr. Chamberlain, the late Consul General at Mexico City, in his book, "Not All the King's Horses." The difficulty is not merely the inconvenience of the loss of a finger, a thumb or an ear, but the operation is not aseptically performed, blood poisoning and gangrene ensue and. * * * * * May we not strongly advocate that the bandits be urged to adopt a rule discountenancing such a practice, or at least that they be held to a "strict accountability?"

Yes! Mexico has been and is being torn by civil war and infested by bandits. This is an important fact about Mexico. But it is not the most important fact.

Traveling down from Monterey in the State of Nuevo Leon to Tampico, I talked with a Mexican who was a planter in a small way. I asked him about the bandits or rebels. *He said that after a raid if complaint is made to the Carranzistas they wait for 24 hours to give the rebels*

plenty of time to get away and then they come in and loot whatever is left. He said the names and the hiding-out places were well known and made the charge, which I heard repeated again and again with strong attendant circumstantial evidence, that Carranza did not want to restore order because it meant the end of his personal power. So long as disorder continues there is a reason for postponing the elections and continuing such despotic power as Carranza now possesses.

While in Mexico City a few weeks the capitol was visited by General Santos, of Nuevo Leon, and his picture appeared in the papers. I remembered the name. My Mexican friend going down from Monterey had told me all about him. An election had recently taken place in Monterey. Santos, the Carranza General, was a candidate. The election itself, "mirabile dictu," was conducted honestly. The candidate against Santos was named Garcia. So violent was the feeling against Carranza that Garcia received upwards of 15,000 votes. Santos could muster with all his military power a meagre 400 votes, but Santos had his soldiers, and his soldiers had rifles and cartridges, and my Mexican friend told me Carranza chose Santos because he knew Santos would start a revolution if he were not declared elected. Garcia being an inoffensive prosperous business man, with houses in various towns of Nuevo Leon, was not expected to, and did not, start a revolution.

Louis Cabrera, Carranza's Minister of Hacienda, was arguing to postpone elections next year and keep Carranza in power indefinitely; also to continue the indefinite powers of Carranza over the treasury.

I read:

"Cabrera was quoted as saying that two Governors and two Legislatures were now functioning in Tabasco and San Luis Potosi,

while in Guanajuato, *Nuevo Leon* and *Coahuila* candidates had been imposed against the indicated choice of the people."

Perhaps Louis Cabrera overstated his case in attempting to prove his Chief's point.

You may ask if the people of Mexico are hostile to Carranza why do they not throw off his power?

First, perhaps because they are revolutionary weary, and Secondly, because they cannot get arms and ammunition.

As a practical matter recognition by the United States meant that the United States put Carranza in power and continued recognition by the United States may mean his continuance in power until one of his Generals becomes so strong that he believes he can seize the throne.

Yes! The present rule in Mexico is that of a military despotism. This is an important fact. But it is not the most important fact about Mexico.

Bolshevism. No survey of Mexico would be complete which omitted a word about Bolshevism. Emma Goldman was recently quoted as saying:

"When as Trotzky's Ambassador I come back to Washington and ride up to the White House steps in my limousine and step from my limousine, you will see bowing and scraping all the dirty little officials who are hounding me now."

Emma Goldman reminds me of Mexico and the Mexican Constitution, because of the remark of a distinguished lawyer, Mr. Burges, before the American Bar Association:

"I have no extraneous evidence that the Carranza Constitution of 1917 was framed by Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, but I am convinced that there is nothing in

that document to give offense to those militant champions of a liberty unregulated by law."

You say are we not far afield from Meixco? No. *The Utopia alike of Trotzky and Carranza is a despotism of force under the guise of a great popular reform.*

A constitution is a dull subject, but this one of 1917 has features which would be droll if the whole fabric of society were not threatened by the poison of German socialism and Marxism.

One cannot grasp the full significance of events in Mexico unless one knows the radicalism of the group there in control—in control by virtue not of the will of the people, but *vi et armis*.

Carranza for nearly four years has taken the income of the foreign-owned railroads and other utilities after confiscating out and out the assets of the banks, under the guise of receivership, the result of forced loans to him and includes in his boasted aggregate of revenues of 160,000,000 pesos a year, the income of the public utilities, without any payment of bond interest or dividend to the stockholders—not even the payment of a centavo of interest on the national debt. He boldly presses forward his project for the confiscation of foreign-owned properties in defiance of the protests of the civilized world. He has no shadow of excuse for his continued seizures of the railroad revenues. He does set up a miserable technicality in defence of his claim of right to take the petroleum properties of foreigners—a technicality that by a Constitution new rules of property may be set up which will sweep away prior absolute rights of foreigners without pretense of compensation. And this in the teeth of the contrary assurance given at the time of Carranza's recognition. All these are evidences of Bolshevism which has been defined by a clever Texan as "Czarism in overalls," and the essence of whose creed is to kill those who have, that their belongings may be possessed.

One would suppose that there could be no more important fact about Mexico than that an experiment in Bolshevism is being set up and recognized and permitted in the Western Hemisphere. But it is not the most important fact about Mexico.

The most important fact about Mexico is that the Mexican people themselves, as the result of nine years of blood and desolation, are in a state of hopeless misery. With all the wrongs that have been done to Americans—and the confiscation, accomplished and under way is but an incident in a program of anti-foreign Bolshevism—and with all the resentment we must feel against Carranza and those who support and defend him, we must not feel rancor about the Mexican people. *We, the people of the United States, placed Carranza in power by according him recognition; and the tens of thousands of ruined Americans and our hundreds of American dead are as nothing to the wrongs and sufferings of the Mexican people. A million dead, hundreds of thousands widows and orphans. And no hope for the future.* A military despotism which gives up each state or territory to the absolute power of the general in command. The people oppressed beyond belief, while the Generals wax rich. In a land of untold riches, the people in poverty and misery, beggars of all ages, down to the small boys and girls with their pitiful “*Por amor de Madre de Dios, Senor.*” The hopeless misery of the Mexican people is the most important fact about Mexico.

And now what is the most important thing for us? This: That in the future America shall realize and do her full duty, in mercy and righteousness and justice and honor; that there may be sympathy with, not rancor against, the Mexican people who are worthy of our help, almost all of them, but millions of whom have been ruthlessly, needlessly sacrificed in the unending struggles for supremacy and power. Our pity should go out to widows and orphans living in squalor and shame; to the children growing up

with no education except in vice and beggary. Have you ever seen a small boy asleep on a door step in the bitter cold of that high plateau, his small frozen legs sticking out from his thin worn serape? Can you forget that there will be 5,000 and more such in Mexico City huddling together on door steps tonight? *No matter what our Government does, at least we can do something to help these innocent wronged ones.* Our hearts and sympathy went out to Belgium, ground beneath the heel of the invader. Germany was a foreign foe, but civil war and oppression are no less bitter than the struggles of peoples. And our sympathy and help, actual, substantial help in the building of homes and hospitals, and in the furnishing of food and clothing and schools—for schools have for years been neglected—these are some of the things that we can do for Mexico.

And we can think straight about Mexico. During the last war it was the duty of every man to shoot straight and think straight. It will always be our duty as free, self-governing Americans to think straight, get the facts, and form wise, sane judgments. Unaffected by cynicism or sentimentality, let us "see life steadily and see it whole." Let us not be led away by prejudice against either foreigners or our fellow-citizens. Let us not assume without proof that Americans in foreign lands forget all traditions of decency or are debarred by the mere fact of their enterprise from the consideration and regard and protection of their fellow-citizens. There is a curious poison gas of Bolshevism abroad in the land anent business and business-men. It is intangible, but its deadly implication is that business men are not to be trusted in business affairs and that the more successful and efficient they are the less they are to be trusted. For common sense and charity alike, give me the big-hearted man of business with wide experience and broad vision. Oh, for a Lincoln to preach again the modern gospel of labor and the dignity of labor and the right of labor to protection, whether the labor be of the hand or of the

brain. We shall never orient ourselves correctly toward the problem of Mexico until we believe in our American business men there—many of them pioneers—all of them brave men with American ideals, whose leaven has already lightened the lump and raised the level of labor throughout parts of Mexico. Do you know that Mr. Jenkins built and endowed a hospital in Puebla? Do you know that the oil companies in Vera Cruz have equipped and are equipping their plants and camps with schools and hospitals for Mexicans? It seems odd that it should be necessary to plead for common ordinary justice for fellow-Americans with spirit and enterprise enough to venture into other lands that America may play its proper part in the affairs of the world. *Yet there is insidious propaganda which impliedly or directly imputes sinister motives and wrong acts to Americans wholly innocent, propaganda which some seize eagerly as an excuse for not accepting an uncomfortable truth and others use as an anodyne to prevent one's conscience from, assuming a disagreeable duty.*

If all good people could get together with full knowledge of the facts on a platform of righteousness and justice and honor, the future of Mexico and the future of America would be secured. *America does not desire, and, please God, will never take one inch of territory from Mexico.* There is a point of view, however, toward life which seems to me that of mental and moral strabismus, and that is the point of view of the pacifists, the men or women who put peace above justice and righteousness and honor. There be such who talk about Mexico. One said the other day, "How many boys would you be willing to have killed to protect Americans in Mexico and American rights in Mexico?" It is impossible to answer a point of view like that. How many policemen are we willing to have killed in order to quell a riot? How many firemen are we willing to have killed in order to quell a conflagration? How many of our boys were we willing to



have killed in order that the flags of freedom might still float on the seven seas? Some pacifist friends of mine talked just the same way about protecting American rights prior to and after April 6th, 1917. No one believes in war. No one but a coward and cur and a traitor to America and American ideals will advocate a long-continued and unjust peace. How many boys would we have killed? It is a bitter and startling question. Personally, my bedrock belief is, that none need be killed and that American rights can be protected fully if we are willing to and ready to make the sacrifice to protect American rights and if the rest of the world knows and believes that we are. But as has been said, it is not so important that a man shall continue to live as that he shall have ideals for which he is willing to die. If American lives are taken; if American women are dishonored; if American rights are persistently disregarded so that peace may no longer continue in righteousness and justice and honor, will not the question for us be not, "Have you kept the peace?" but "Have you kept the faith?"